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ABSTRACT

This paper both corrects and expands on the work of Corwin and his colleagues in "Reform and Organizational Survival: The Teacher Corps as an Instrument in Educational Change." It is the author's contention that, by analysing variables that are common to all 10 programs discussed in that study and ignoring those that are unique to the individual programs, only part of the picture from which an assessment of the programs can be made could have been presented. He then presents a brief condensation of those unique variables of the Lansing Teacher Corps that are independent of the common variables as identified by Corwin. These variables are grouped according to program, personnel, and administrative variables. Personnel variables listed are a) the ethnic composition of interns, b) the socioethnic composition of interns, c) the age composition of interns, d) the value and cultural differences between teacher and intern, and the attitude of cooperating teachers. Program variables are a) the undergraduate nature of the program, b) the need for teachers with bilingual skills, and c) community and school district involvement in Teacher Corps programs. Michigan State's concern for competency-based teacher education is included as an administrative variable. (JA)

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THE UNIQUE VARIABLES OF THE LANSING TEACHER CORPS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
The Unique Variables of the Lansing Teacher Corps Program	2
Personnel Variables	5
Program Variables	8
Administrative Variables	12
Summary	15

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Corwin and his colleagues in Reform and Organizational Survival: The Teacher Corps as an Instrument of Educational Change, have isolated a group of common variables associated with ten representative programs in an attempt to explain the successes and failures of Teacher Corps as an instrument of educational change. It is my contention that in analyzing variables that are common to all ten programs, solely, and ignoring those that are unique to the individual programs, one only has part of the picture from which an assessment is to be made. Perhaps an analogy will illustrate my position more clearly. If a basketball coach were asked why his team won a big game, he could respond by saying, "We won because we scored more points," or, "Our big man had 21 defensive rebounds and our number one and two scorers had 25 and 27 points, respectively;" this, however, would only be part of the picture. This, I feel, is similar to what Corwin, et al, attempted to do. A more knowledgeable response by the coach might have referred to such things as: the missed free throws, the turn-overs, the blocked shots, the full-court press, the opponents in foul trouble, the man-to-man defense, the bench strength, as well as those points he made earlier. In this paper, an attempt will be made to highlight those unique variables, those missing parts, that help complete the picture.

THE UNIQUE VARIABLES OF THE LANSING TEACHER CORPS PROGRAM

Dr. Ronald Corwin and his colleagues have attempted an evaluation of the Teacher Corps Program. This attempt was made exclusive of the traditional parameters characteristic of such studies, i.e., causes for failure and reasons for success. Corwin and his associates acknowledge the difficulty of such an undertaking given the diverse nature of the program. This diversity, in part, explains the futility of any attempt to justify an assessment of a national program in terms of local success or failure.

In examining the ten samples used in this study, Corwin, et al, attempted to isolate certain variables that were common in all programs; these variables were treated as system factors that are present in varying degrees in all programs. Then they were statistically analyzed to determine the variable influence of these factors as they interacted with others.

As an administrator, my position regarding Dr. Corwin's study of Teacher Corps must be taken from a comparative frame of reference. Specifically, how accurately has Dr. Corwin's work described Teacher Corps as represented by the Lansing Lansing program directed by the Lansing School District and Model Cities in conjunction with Michigan State University.

This writer is in complete agreement with Dr. Corwin that this study of Teacher Corps was, indeed, a monumental task, especially when one considers the ambiguous and nebulous guidelines used for administering the program. This ambiguity is cause for each Teacher Corps program to be very different from all other programs; therefore, a study of ten Teacher Corps programs is just that -- a study of ten Teacher Corps programs. While the study does identify some basic commonalities among the programs, there are many differences that are uniquely applicable to their respective programs. Granted, these unique differences are

difficult to evaluate and are usually associated with only one program, but they, nevertheless, affect the success of the program, however this is defined, as well as the common variables isolated by Corwin. In the final analysis, somebody will ask for a final report or, more specifically, will want to know if the program was successful or not. Therefore, if the unique variables of the Lansing Teacher Corps were examined, then one would certainly need to ascertain if the same set of common variables were at work to cause the program to be described a success or a failure.

I agree with Dr. Corwin and his colleagues that Teacher Corps is an effort to change the system whereas most other federal programs have had as their basic objective to change the child. These efforts toward change, however, have not been standardized and, therefore, each effort must be viewed from its dissimilarities rather than its similarities. If a determination has to be made in terms of overall success of the Teacher Corps Program, then the response should be in terms of success for specific programs rather than an average assessment for all programs. There is a real danger that our 'obsession with sameness' will lead us to the conclusion that there is just one way to change the system so as to improve the educational opportunities of culturally different children.

The relationship between the unique variables and the common variables is very important. When these unique variables are examined in the light of the common variables, it presents a clearer assessment; however, it must be acknowledged that this assessment is applicable to only one Teacher Corps program. No attempt is to be made to superimpose this assessment on other programs, nor is it to be used as a standard by which other programs are to be measured. On the other hand, in examining only the common variables, we tend to lean toward the obsession with sameness paradigm and overlook one of the most important variables: the uniqueness of the individual programs.

Before examining the unique variables associated with Lansing Teacher Corps, it might be of value to list those variables that Corwin isolated as being common to the few programs he studied. The researchers submitted 37 independent variables for factor analysis. These factors combined to yield seven dimensions that correlated with the original concepts of the study. Three of these factors when combined accounted for 48 percent of the explained variance. They are: (1) "quality and interdependence of the boundary personnel," (this refers to characteristics of the university staff and the team leaders) (B = .59); (2) "organizational control exercised by the school system," (B = .23); and (3) "uniqueness of the outside change agents," (B = .39). The four remaining factors -- "competence of teaching staff," "quality and modernization of context," "competence of the administration," and "professionalism and social liberalism of staff" -- together only made an additional three percent contribution to the explained variance. Thus, the seven factors accounted for 51 percent of the explained variance.[1]

Following is a brief condensation of those unique variables of the Lansing Teacher Corps that are independent of those common variables as identified by Corwin.

The variables that are unique to the Lansing Teacher Corps may be grouped into three categories: variables that are related to Teacher Corps personnel, variables that are related to the Teacher Corps program, and variables that are related to the administration of the program.

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[1]Ronald G. Corwin, Reform and Organizational Survival: The Teacher Corps as an Instrument of Educational Change, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973.

PERSONNEL VARIABLES

The Ethnic Composition of the Interns

The ethnic composition of the interns is probably one of the most unique variables of the Lansing Teacher Corps program, especially when compared to the programs reported in the study. In both cases, Sixth Cycle and Eighth Cycle, an effort was made to recruit interns representative of the major ethnic groups found in Michigan -- they are American Indians, Mexican-Americans, Afro-Americans, and Caucasians. Each group of interns for the Lansing Teacher Corps was comprised of slightly less than one-third Mexican-Americans, Afro-Americans, and Anglo-Americans with the remaining portion, approximately eight to ten percent, being comprised of American Indians. The Lansing School District was anxious to increase the number of minority staff members, and this commitment was manifested in its recruitment efforts for the past two years. In writing the proposals for the Sixth and Eighth Cycle programs, the committees established recruitment guidelines for the inclusion of each ethnic group with hopes that some of the interns would become Lansing School District staff members after graduation.

The Socio-Economic Status of the Interns

The socio-economic status of both sets of interns is very closely related to the ethnic composition of the groups. Many of the minority interns came from backgrounds that included a combination of circumstances that could be described as impoverished. As an example, several interns came from large families with limited financial assets which resulted in their withdrawl from college to seek employment in order to help support their families. Also, several interns were forced to interrupt their education because of limited finances and the expenses associated with attending college. There were other students who came from more affluent backgrounds -- backgrounds that included parents with college educations

and professional occupations. This objective, the recruitment of heterogeneous groups of interns, was achieved with both the Sixth and Eighth Cycle of interns.

The above two variables combined to have a positive effect on the total program. In several instances, students were placed in schools which had high percentages of youngsters from culturally diverse and ethnically different backgrounds, and because some of the interns came from similar types of situations, the identity problem was less severe. Many cooperating teachers felt these interns were able to establish rapport with the youngsters, to communicate effectively, and to assist those cooperating teachers from more affluent backgrounds in acquiring greater cultural awareness. The feeling that these interns enhanced the programs was generally shared by a majority of the participants.

The Age Span of the Interns

Another variable thought to be uniquely associated with the Lansing Teacher Corps program was the age span among the interns. This feeling was particularly true for Sixth Cycle Teacher Corps, in that the age span for this group ranged from a forty-three year old grandfather to a nineteen year old college drop-out. The older interns tended to add a measure of stability to the group. The wisdom, as well as the variety of their experiences, combined to have a positive effect on the younger, less knowledgeable interns.

The Value-Cultural Differences Between Teachers and the Interns

The positive impact of the matured interns helped to ameliorate the value-culture differences that existed between the cooperating teachers and the interns. These differences existed because there were three cultural groups -- blacks, whites and Chicanos -- and two socio-economic groups, lower-class and middle-class, involved in a program with a common goal but with differing views as to how that goal should be achieved. In most instances, the members of the various

ethnic and social groups represented had experienced limited contact with those of the other cultures. This same observation was applicable to the classroom teachers and to a large percentage of their students. These circumstances seemed ideal for the evolvement of splinter groups or cliques based upon ethnic heritage. This situation did not materialize, however, because of several important components designed to accomplish understanding and acceptance of those from diverse cultural backgrounds; these components were bi-lingual/bi-cultural training, social and emotional education, and urban-ethnic studies. A large part of the credit for the successful implementation of these programs may be directly attributed to the support provided by the senior interns.

The Attitude of the Cooperating Teachers in Regard to the University Faculty

A final variable in this category perhaps not singularly unique to Lansing was the attitude of the classroom teachers toward the university staff. This attitude manifested itself first in the form of a threat from the college professors to the classroom teachers. Specifically, the threat is that my (teacher) teaching methods are under fire; you (professor) are here to evaluate me, to point out what I am doing wrong and to embarrass me in front of the students. Gradually, this threat evolved to a critical assessment of the college professors. This assessment -- you (professor) have never taught; therefore, you are not qualified to judge me, or it has been so long since you've been in the classroom you've forgotten what the real-world is like -- was true for some of the professors but was completely unfounded for others. In a few cases, this hostile attitude digressed to the level where teachers were telling interns to forget what they learned in their college classes because it had no place in the classroom. Others were saying, in essence, prove to me that what you are teaching the interns is better than the methods I am currently using. It should

be noted that this condition existed in Sixth Cycle only because the cooperating teachers were, by far, the least involved group in the training procedures. This attitude of some of the cooperating teachers toward the university staff tended to have a negative effect on the program. Programmatic changes and revisions were made for Eighth Cycle, and cooperating teachers are involved in training sessions designed to enhance the training the interns receive.

PROGRAM VARIABLES

A. Undergraduate Program

The most obvious variable of the Lansing Teacher Corps program that is different from those programs analyzed by Corwin is that the Lansing program is an undergraduate program. The interns enter the program with junior status and, at the end of the two-year training cycle, graduated with teacher certification and a bachelor's degree. These interns were recruited from a variety of sources: a local junior college, other junior colleges throughout Michigan, and four year institutions located in Michigan and other regions of the country. Since these interns had only been exposed to a post secondary milieu for a two-year period, their level of sophistication in assessing the worth of their instructors was less than was reported for interns in the Corwin study. The interns' undergraduate status tended to effect the program both positively and negatively. The negative impact on the program was due to their limited professional training and total lack of experience in the classroom. These two factors combined to make the job of the cooperating teacher somewhat more challenging. More positively, the students were more receptive to competency-based training in that they had no basis in traditional method training for comparison.

Bi-lingual/Bi-cultural Component

Another very prominent variable of the Lansing Teacher Corps program is its bi-lingual/bi-cultural component. On the one hand, this is especially noteworthy when one considers that Lansing has a minority student enrollment of 22 percent, and more than 2,500, or about eight percent, are Spanish-speaking students. On the other hand, approximately one percent of the teaching staff in the Lansing School District have Spanish surnames. These two factors point up the exigency faced by the Lansing School District to hire teachers with bi-lingual/bi-cultural training. Involvement with Teacher Corps is one effort on the part of the Lansing School District to ameliorate this condition.

The process of structuring a bi-lingual/bi-cultural component has been developmental in nature. Several different processes were experimented with, abandoned or refined. As structured in its current revised form, we feel that the bi-lingual/bi-cultural component of the Lansing Teacher Corps program needs to achieve certain objectives in order to prepare teachers to work with such children. These are the objectives to be met by the interns in the Eighth Cycle program:

1. The intern will have a working understanding of a bi-lingual education philosophy.
2. The intern will develop oral language skills in Spanish at a minimum rating of FSI I (Foreign Service Institute Scale).
3. The intern will have an understanding of the historical background of the Spanish-speaking people in the United States.
4. The intern will be able to translate knowledge of the Spanish-speaking culture into meaningful classroom experiences for children.
5. The interns will be able to teach English as a second language to both children and adults.

6. The (bi-lingual) interns will be able to teach Spanish as a second language.
7. The interns will be familiar with materials and resources available in bi-lingual education.
8. The intern will be able to design and develop a bi-lingual curriculum to meet the individual needs of his students.
9. The intern will develop diagnostic skills for determining language dominance (English-Spanish) of Spanish-speaking children and will be able to diagnose and develop a strategy for working with language interference problems.
10. The intern will be able to combine the skills obtained in the bi-lingual component with the general pedagogical skills obtained in the other teacher training components to create a harmonious learning atmosphere for all children.

The plan for achieving the stated objectives of the bi-lingual component will be spread over a two year time-line. The first year will emphasize obtaining a working understanding of the needs of the Spanish-speaking children in the school system. This emphasis will be field centered. The second year will be a combination of field/theory as it applies to bi-lingual education.

Willingness to Hire Teacher Corps Graduates

The staff members of the Lansing Teacher Corps program have been encouraged by the response of the Lansing School District in its hiring practices. Approximately 50 percent of the Sixth Cycle interns hired by the school district were of Spanish heritage. This is a record of which we are justly proud, and we have every indication that the bi-lingual/bi-cultural component made a positive contribution to the success of the program.

Community Involvement

The Lansing community has been concerned, involved and supportive of Teacher Corps from its inception. Not only do we feel this to be a unique variable, we also feel it to be a very positive and desirable variable. Community representatives were involved in the writing of both the Sixth and Eighth Cycle proposals. The advisory committees for both cycles had representatives of all institutions involved, including the local community. When screening and recruitment committees were formed to interview prospective interns, representatives of the community were included. However, we feel the most positive endorsement of Teacher Corps by the community has been the on-going active involvement with the program on a daily basis. Indications of this daily involvement are the Bucket Brigade, a list of resource volunteers for classroom presentations, lunch room volunteers, and participation in cultural heritage events. One of the highlights of the Sixth Cycle program was the Teacher Corps Fair: our intent was to put the program on public exhibition and to explain its philosophy through classroom teaching demonstrations, slide/tape presentations, displays, information booths and free literature.

A final effort, very well received, to maintain community support has been the Teacher Corps Newsletter. This newsletter is circulated locally and nationally, and it contains items of interest on the students, cooperating teachers, interns, Teacher Corps staff, community personnel, and special events. The support of the community, along with its active involvement, combined to have an overall positive effect on the success of the program. This was particularly true for the Model Cities neighborhoods.

ADMINISTRATIVE VARIABLES

State Department Commitment to Competency-Based Teacher Education

The Michigan State Department of Education is interested in developing a model for competency-based teacher certification. While no model or standards have been established, work toward this goal is progressing through the state-supported institutions of higher education.

The Michigan State Department of Education has been actively involved in planning and coordination of both the Sixth and Eighth Cycle Lansing Teacher Corps programs. This department has demonstrated its continued support of the Lansing Teacher Corps program by consenting to place a representative on the advisory council. The State of Michigan is a leader among those states that train teachers and, in keeping with this leadership role, the State Department of Education is anxious to have a model of competency-based teacher certification that can be used throughout the state and the nation. The active role of the State Department of Education with the planning and implementation of the Lansing Teacher Corps program and its concern for competency-based teacher certification were positive influences on the overall success of the program.

Michigan State University Committment to Competency-Based Teacher Education

For several years, the College of Education at Michigan State University has been developing and refining several alternative teacher training models. Many of these models have incorporated the competency-based philosophy; this philosophy manifests itself in such programs as Training the Teachers of Teachers, Elementary Intern Program, Mott Institute for Community Improvement, and Teacher Corps. While these programs are experimental in nature, many of the successful aspects of the programs are incorporated into the regular teacher training program. In addition to the competency-based philosophy, examples of successful aspects of Teacher Corps worthy of consideration for adoption are the

bi-lingual/bi-cultural component, combining the theory and methods courses into a coordinated team effort, and the two-year internship. Also, the fact that most of the staff members had had previous experience with earlier competency-based teacher education programs was excellent training for their involvement with Teacher Corps. Michigan State University's role as a developer of new training procedures, both pre-service and in-service, and its desire for a partnership relationship with the Lansing School District regarding teacher education have been positive endorsements of the Teacher Corps program.

Tripartite Administration

The tripartite administrative organization of the Lansing Teacher Corps was considered to be a variable unique to this program. In addition to the Lansing School District as prime contractor and the Colleges of Education and Urban Development at Michigan State University as subcontractors, Model Cities became involved administratively through its financial support of the community coordinator. Model Cities was interested in the community involvement component of the Teacher Corps program because many of the schools in which Teacher Corps is involved are located within the Model Cities area of Lansing -- the rationale being that the community coordinator working cooperatively with the interns would have a much greater impact upon the area than either working independently. Therefore, the Model Cities involvement was primarily concerned with the community aspect as it related to the Model neighborhood. This involvement caused Model Cities to be concerned administratively with the type of community participation plans developed by the interns. While this tripartite administrative arrangement has had a general positive impact it has presented some specific problems. When three administrative agencies are involved in decision making, responsibilities are not always clearly drawn. Usually, a disproportionately high number of

meetings are required involving many people to successfully accomplish the administrative tasks. Also, the goals of the program tend to be compromised because of the conflicting roles and differing perspectives expressed by the various administrative agencies. On the other hand, this tripartite administrative organization exemplifies the type of cooperative effort exxential to bring about change in the total system.

Availability of Public Schools

The philosophy of the Lansing School District is characterized by its building autonomy concept; therefore, the decision to be involved with Teacher Corps was, in each case, a building level decision. In this regard, while the central office assumed a positive attitude, each Teacher Corps school had to be individually convinced of the worth of the program. The number of schools from which selections could be made was further reduced by eliminating those schools not having a high enough percentage of minority students. Additionally, those schools involved in the busing program were eliminated. This placed Teacher Corps in a position of accepting any school that was willing to become involved with the program regardless of the desirability of the school. Operationally, this meant the Teacher Corps program was involved in some schools that were less than desirable -- primarily because of the low level of commitment to the goals and objectives of the program. This variable had a pronounced negative influence on the success of the program. Perhaps this negative influence could have been eliminated had the school sites been selected with the same degree of thoroughness as were the interns.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, the unique variables associated with the Lansing Teacher Corps, as discussed above, are as follows:

A. Personnel Variables

(1) The ethnic composition of the interns
(2) The socio-ethnic composition of the interns
(3) The age composition of the interns
(4) The value-cultural differences between the teacher and the interns
(5) The attitude of the cooperating teachers with regard to the university staff

B. Program Variables

(1) The undergraduate nature of the program
(2) The need for teachers with bi-lingual skills in the public schools
(3) The willingness of the school district to hire Teacher Corps graduates
(4) Community involvement in the Teacher Corps programs

C. Administrative Variables

(1) Michigan Department of Education and its concern for competency-based teacher education
(2) Michigan State University and its concern for competency-based teacher education
(3) The tripartite organizational arrangement
(4) The availability of schools in which to work

When these unique variables are examined along with the common variables isolated by Corwin, then the picture becomes clearer. Some of the unexplained variance might be explained if the unique variables of each program were examined independently.